

E 302

.6

.L26 C8

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00003358756







JOHN LANGDON

BY

CHARLES R. CORNING

DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW HAMPSHIRE SOCIETY OF
SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
APRIL 19, 1898

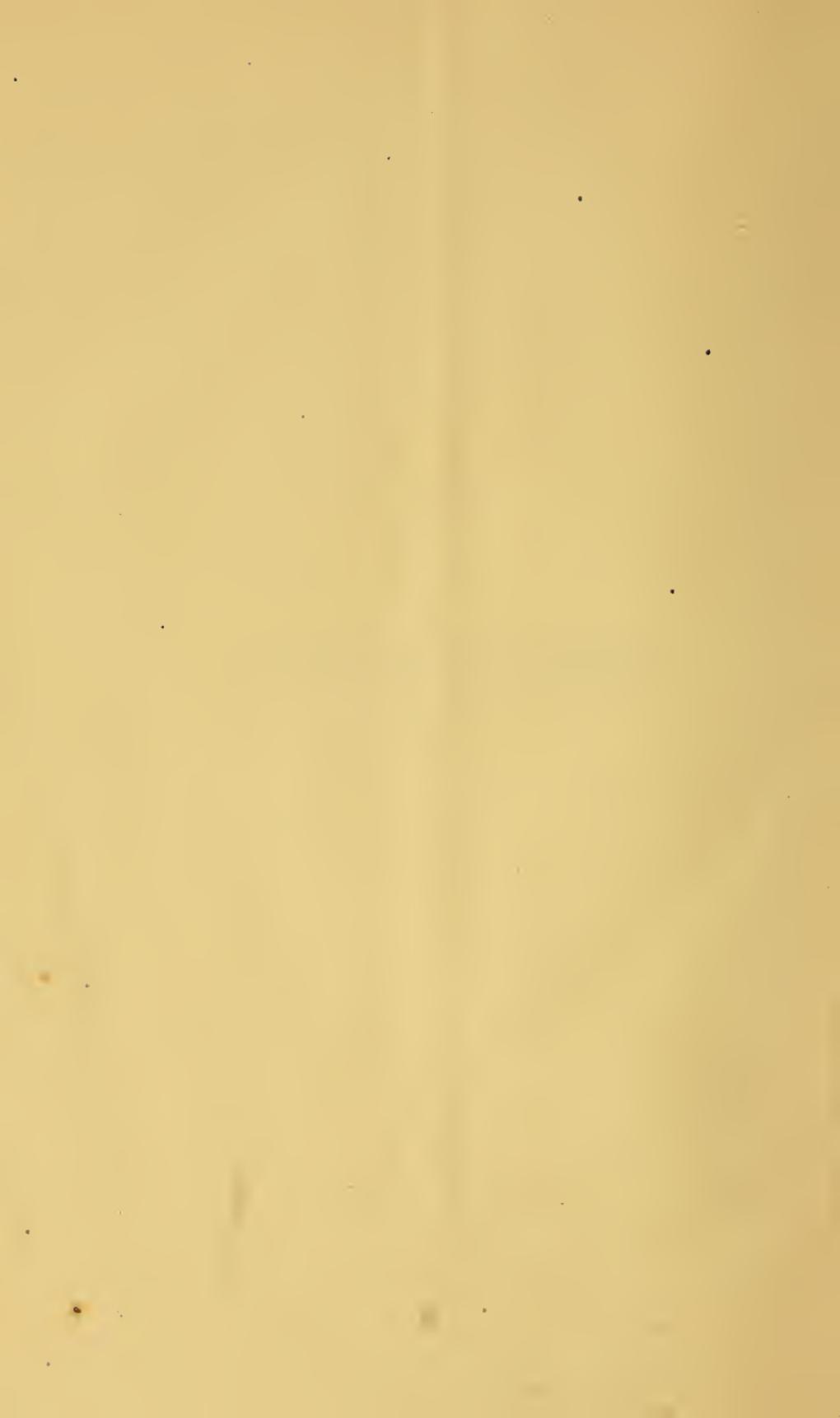
CONCORD
RUMFORD PRINTING COMPANY
1903

L 26 C 8

W 82609

X

JOHN LANGDON



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN LANGDON.

The 19th of April is a date of singular significance in the calendar of American history. It is also a day of peculiar endearment to every patriot heart. Lexington and Concord, the announcement of peace with Great Britain, the passage of the Massachusetts Sixth through the scowling and hissing mobs of secession in Baltimore city. Oh, rich, natal day of Independence and Union! How we of this generation, almost touching the dial hands of another century, should remember and honor this auspicious day. Let us resolve that the bright fire of this society be annually kindled, that its members, the descendants of those who struck the first blow for national supremacy may commingle with those who, eighty-six years later, struck the last blow that made this nation one and indivisible. Here let us renew our oaths of perpetual allegiance to the welfare of our country; here let us try ourselves by the lofty standard of the fathers, and be inspired by their revered memory.

Wednesday, the 19th of April, 1775, was no surprise to the Sons of Liberty. The storm had long been growing dark and the air was full of electricity; only the final spark needed to be touched. For ten years the possibility of war had been felt by the leaders. For two years, at least, its probability had been realized by the people. For a month its certainty was recognized by friend and foe. General Gage was a tried soldier who knew the temper and the fibre of the Americans, for he had fought side by side with Washington at Braddock's defeat twenty years before; he saw the situation and read aright the signs of the times. Sam Adams, more radical than the Revolution itself, and John Hancock, the man of station and wealth, spoke the loudest. The orders were given, and the red coats, embarking at the foot of Boston common, were silently rowed across the Charles to the Cambridge shore, whence they began their early morning march. And so, in characters of blood, was written the birth of American independence. But you know the whole thrilling story of the minute

men and the battle at the bridge, and of the harassed retreat of the king's vanquished army back to the patriot capital.

April 19 was but the culmination of the dissent and resistance that the clear thinkers of England had long foreseen. Less than a month earlier Burke had made his great speech on conciliation, and with prophetic words pictured the attitude of the Americans.

"Another circumstance in our colonies," said he, "which contributes no mean part towards the growth and effect of this intractable spirit is their education. In no country, perhaps, in the world is the law so general a study. The profession itself is numerous and powerful, and in most provinces it takes the lead. The greater number of the deputies sent to the congress were lawyers. But all who read, and most do read, endeavor to obtain some smattering in that science. I have been told by an eminent bookseller, that in no branch of his business, after tracts of popular devotion, were so many books as those on the law exported to the plantations. I hear that they have sold nearly as many of Blackstone's Commentaries in America as in England. General Gage marks out this disposition very particularly in a letter on your table. He states that all the people in his government are lawyers or smattered in law,—and that in Boston they have been enabled, by successful chicane, wholly to evade many parts of one of your capital penal constitutions. This study renders men acute, inquisitive, dexterous, prompt in attack, ready in debate, full of resources. In other countries, the people, more simple and of a less mercurial cast, judge of an ill principle in government only by an actual grievance; here they anticipate the evil, and judge of the pressure of the grievance by the badness of the principle. They augur misgovernment at a distance and snuff the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze."

The eloquent lips of the Irish orator uttered the cardinal note of the Whig party of England, the party of constitutional prerogative. So spoke imperious Chatham and Barré, and later, Richmond and Rockingham. It was the golden prelude to another chapter in Anglo-Saxon freedom. The Revolution was but an emphatic development in the evolution of man's individuality. It was bound to come; peaceably if possible, violently if it must; for the seed whence it sprang had been sown at Runnymede.

It was a long and disheartening succession of centuries from Runnymede to the surrender at Appomattox, and more than once the light of liberty was recognized solely by its fitful shadows. But, in God's providence, the precious spark was preserved. It survived

the tortures of monarchs and the decay of ages, until it gleamed in the glad wilderness of the new world. Jamestown and Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay are the white marks showing the way from Runnymede and Naseby to Bunker Hill and Gettysburg. They are the splendid sunbursts over a larger and holier freedom.

The prerevolutionary annals of the thirteen colonies were but the advancing steps in the development of the greater history of governments and its relations to the people. Taxation without representation was an incident, not cumulative but suggestive. The tea tax, the disciplinary Boston Port bill, were, as we look upon them now, the benignant signs of a new evolution of civic progress. Sam Adams interpreted them with a clearer vision than any of his associates. Each ministerial aggression was to him a corner-stone of the new edifice. He saw nothing to regret in the commotion of the hour, for to him revolution was purely the result of two stupendous factors, namely, dissatisfaction with existing ideas, and dissatisfaction with existing practices. Selfishness was the ruling passion in the British cabinet. George the Third, remembering the words of his mother, determined to be king. The Board of Trade made the American Revolution possible. No one set of men, no particular ministry, no specific act or resolve, not Townsend nor North, occasioned the war. It was the baleful spirit of commerce that insisted on governing a people by the rules and customs decreed by parliamentary ignorance. And, therefore, in spite of bribes and official fawning, England found the colonies as one. Do what she would, the colonies were as resolute in 1768 as they were in 1775. "We should stand upon the broad common ground of those natural rights that we all feel and know as men and descendants of Englishmen. I wish the charters may not ensnare us at last, by drawing different colonies to act differently in this great cause. Whenever that is the case, all will be over with the whole. There ought to be no New England man, no New Yorker, known on the continent; but all of us Americans." Thus spoke the patriotic Christopher Gadsden of South Carolina.

The British ministry would not believe that acts directed against Massachusetts would be resented in Virginia. Common cause was a truth rejected utterly in the councils of the king. When the charter of Massachusetts had been annulled and the Boston Port bill enacted in retaliation for the tea party, Washington exclaimed, "I will raise one thousand men, subsist them at my own expense, and march myself at their head for the relief of Boston." When compensation for the drenched tea was bruited Gadsden cried out, "Don't pay for

an ounce of the damned tea." But still the ministry, stolid in its conceit, kept on playing with the sacred fire. As the time for action drew near, the altars of Liberty, dotting the coast from the St. Croix to the Savannah, burst into steadier flame and arched the western horizon with a glow never before seen by man. Georgia and New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Virginia were acting as one. The rice planter of the South and the farmer on the New England hills made a common cause, and the grand march toward independence had begun. The committees of correspondence were enriching the literature of human liberty, while the great heart of the colonies beat responsive to the duties of the hour. Royal authority was waning, and the government of the people waxed stronger as the crisis drew near. Dear old New Hampshire and her patriot sons, empty of purse but resolute of soul, hesitated never a moment at the grave parting of the ways. From her only seaport she too had sent away the tea ships, and her people cried Amen.

And with what orderly steps the men of the Revolution approached the crisis! Violence was foreign to their natures, passion played a minor part, while hatred of the mother country was far from their hearts. And yet the whole land was in arms, but laws were not silent. Then grievances were real, and forms of dissent were expressed in phrase so simple that every man, be he high or low, lettered or ignorant, comprehended the questions of the time and understood the remedy. As yet no sectional jealousies cast their dark shadows; liberty in all its purity was the ideal, and the dedication of its temple was the one solemn purpose in all the thirteen colonies. The men of America had given deep thought to this question. The head and the heart had gone over every argument again and again; nothing was left to chance. The people had been educated to meet the trials of such a time, and their leaders took care to preserve personal liberty and property so as not to bring reproach on the sacredness of their cause.

In New Hampshire resistance to unjust laws was an early plant, and the men of 1774 were repeating in the same theater the scenes of 1684. The names of the actors were changed but the play was strikingly similar. When Edward Randolph came to Portsmouth in 1680, bearing the royal commission as collector of the king's revenue, and began laying unlawful taxes on the commerce of the town, old President Cutts stood across his path and bade him stop. Then came Cranfield, the new governor, bent on usurpation, who kept adjourning the little assembly, hoping at last to con-

vene one subservient to his wishes; but he misjudged the New Hampshire colonists, and in his vexation wrote to the royal secretary of state that "the people are of such mutinous disposition that it is not safe to let them convene." Then he took to governing autocratically by imposing taxes in defiance of provincial law, and in a moment the scattered farmers were one in the common defense. Some of his sheriffs retreated before the clubs of the outraged citizens, while others, attempting to enter the houses to serve their master's writs, were routed by the women pouring scalding water on their heads. The military was called out but not a soldier appeared, and the first fight for personal liberty was fought and won on New Hampshire soil. With the mothers' songs of those days ringing in their ears, what could be expected from the men and women of New Hampshire one hundred years later? As Randolph and Cranfield found their Cutts and their Moody, so Wentworth found his Weare and his Langdon. With regular and orderly steps our ancestors marched to the music of the Revolution, and when the day for action arrived swift messengers spurring over the land found preparation everywhere, so thorough had been the work of the different committees of correspondence.

It seemed as if the whole air was surcharged with the one common thought of the epoch. The expressions of the Virginia house of burgesses found instant response in the New Hampshire assembly. In May, 1773, our assembly voted to instruct its committee to reply to the letter of the Virginia house of burgesses, and a little later appointed a committee of correspondence consisting of seven members. At the same time, Mr. Speaker Wentworth, not Governor John, in addressing the Virginia house, wrote in nervous phrase, saying that in every constitutional plan for securing the rights of British America and removing the present infringements thereon, "our sister colonies may rely that we sincerely join, having no work for ourselves of an exclusive nature in those matters, ever looking on the whole as embarked in the same common bottom."

Events moved fast and the separation grew wider, so in February, 1774, we find the speaker of our New Hampshire assembly now addressing the Massachusetts house. "By the best intelligence we can obtain, it appears that the British ministry are resolved in a great degree, if not fully, to enslave the inhabitants of the colonies in America subject to the crown of Great Britain, if by any means they can effect it, which much concerns the Americans to withstand and prevent. The proposed method of union in all the colonies

hath ever appeared to us since the first recommendation thereof, to be absolutely necessary. . . . You may, therefore, depend on the ready concurrence of this House with the measures tho' necessary to be pursued by the other colonies in the cause of Liberty. . . . Be assured also of our assistance (small as it may be) by contributing all in our power to promote a general union thro' the colonies, which we hope will be so strongly cemented as not to be easily dissolved."

We can almost see and hear the growth of the plant liberty, and why not, when its roots were nourished with sentiments so rich and patriotic? It was at this session of the assembly that we come to understand the exact temper of the time by means of a scene enacted within the walls of the representatives' room. The assembly had appointed a committee of correspondence in flat opposition to the will of the royal governor, who, distressed at their action, promptly adjourned the body; but finding this measure wholly useless, he dissolved the recalcitrant body thinking the members would disperse. But not so. A committee called the members to meet in the royal assembly chamber, and while they were deliberating, in walked Governor Wentworth and his council, attended by John Parker, sheriff of Rockingham. The members all rose at the vice-regal presence, and with decorous calmness listened to a proclamation directing them to disperse and to keep the king's peace. The governor and his party then retired, while the members resumed their seats and discussed the situation.

The crisis had indeed arrived and instant action was imperative. Hesitation or weakness would be fatal. The representatives of the people had received the king's commands to be gone or suffer the penalties of high treason. To each patriot heart came the momentous question, Shall it be forward or shall it be tide waiting until the other colonies be heard from? There was no passion, no outburst of defiance. With splendid courage they made straight for revolution.

They departed from the king's government house forever, and, quickly reassembling under the friendly roof of a patriot citizen of Portsmouth, voted forthwith to request all the towns in the province to send deputies to a convention to be held at Exeter, which should elect delegates to a general congress of the colonies. They also voted to raise so much money, and, in fitting conclusion, they recommended a day for fasting and prayer. The Revolution had surely begun. The summer of 1774 passed into autumn and autumn was lost in winter, and there was no change in public affairs. Wavering opinion

and scattered sentiment had gradually been drawn to a common center and become hardened. To the people the question was clear. Either their delegates at Exeter were wrong and the governor at Portsmouth right, or the reverse was true. Long before winter set in Governor Wentworth became convinced that the union of the colonies would not be lost in New Hampshire, and he so wrote to the ministers. Kindly by nature, in love with his birthplace and friendly to her citizens, the governor found his position perplexing, but he so managed to do his duty as not to offend the patriots. In the presence of the new authority, the government of the people, he never quailed, nor did he asperse that authority in angry remonstrance. He tried to remain the king's servant and the people's friend, but mere popularity did not pass current among the resolute, God-fearing men of one hundred and twenty-three years ago, and Wentworth, one of the sweetest characters in the Revolutionary epoch, was soon driven from his native land though loving New Hampshire to the very last.

Exciting events came in quick succession. In September the ship *Fox* sailed into Portsmouth harbor laden with tea, and the people assembled and declared that the cargo should not be landed. Windows were broken and the magistrates were summoned, but the tea was vanquished, and the *Fox* spread her canvas for Halifax. In November General Gage wanted barracks for his soldiers, but the carpenters of Boston refused to measure a plank or drive a nail, whereupon Gage requested his friend, the governor of New Hampshire, to send to him the much-needed workmen. The agent through whom this business was done was summoned before the committee of correspondence in Rochester, and on his bended knee solemnly acknowledged his error, and as solemnly promised never again to assist the king's cause. Another month brings the people in open conflict with the king, and in the eye of the common law marks them as traitors doomed for the scaffold.

It is now the 13th of December, 1774, and the short winter day in Portsmouth nears the hours of darkness, when over the Boston highway gallops a strange horseman. Few see him and no one recognizes him. But it is the Mercury of the Revolution, Paul Revere. Dashing through the silent streets he draws rein before the house of Samuel Cutts, and disappears within its hospitable doors. He brings dispatches telling of the royal proclamation prohibiting the exportation of powder. This is important, and Mr. Cutts instantly summons the committee of correspondence to meet at his house. One by one they arrive and the news is discussed. Among Revere's despatches

is one announcing the intention of Gage to send a frigate to Portsmouth to guard the harbor and its forts. This means coercion. The committee-men take instant resolution and disappear in the darkness. The morning brings an unwonted commotion. Little groups are chatting at the street corners. The stores are now audience halls. Women talk across the garden fences. Even children on their way to school pause and look interested. "What means this activity?" asks the governor, as he peers from his parlor windows, and he wonders what brings John Sullivan to town, and why he and John Langdon shake hands and smile and direct their steps toward the Portsmouth parade. Before another day ends its course the governor's curiosity had given away to vice-royal indignation, for never before had so gross an outrage been visited upon the king. In broad daylight a mob of rebels had actually marched down to a king's fort and captured its garrison and taken away its munitions of war. Captain Cochran and his guard had been made to surrender at the muzzles of hostile muskets, the fort had been looted, and one hundred barrels of powder carried away by the rebels. Yes, New Hampshire had committed the first overt act in the Revolution, and Castle William and Mary was the Fort Sumter of another embattled age. John Sullivan and John Langdon, with a band of resolute patriots, on that crisp December day, did more than seize a stronghold of the king; they blazed the way to independence and constitutional liberty. Oh, what a deed was that! And yet we almost forget it in the greater events that followed. It was not the crazy deed of a mob, not the wild delirium of the hour, but the solemn blow of warning announcing to kings thenceforth that the rights of a people are dearer and holier than the prerogative of a monarch.

And on that winter day we recognize the meaning of the maxim that men do not make the times, but that times make the men; for John Langdon, in the full flush of manhood, stood on the threshold of the new edifice, and dedicated himself to liberty and his country's cause. The Langdon family, though of sterling worth and long resident in Portsmouth, was not counted among the aristocracy which assembled at the vice-regal court and partook of governmental favors. The Langdon men were tillers of the soil and toilers of the sea, and had been known for generations as men of capacity and resource. The family name appeared on the public records of the province and of the town, and one of the name went as chaplain when Pepperell led his host to Louisbourg in 1745; and we see him again as president of Harvard, offering up his fervent prayers the night before the battle

of Bunker Hill. John Langdon, the most illustrious to bear the name, was born in Portsmouth June 26, 1741, and was one of six children, the younger of the two sons, and was of the sixth generation of pure English yeoman stock born in America. Like many of the youth of that day, he was sent to the celebrated school kept by Major Samuel Hale, where he acquired a satisfactory amount of book learning sufficient for his needs. He was not a student, yet he learned readily and kept what he had learned. He was given to play, but his observation was keen and his memory unusually tenacious. From the school-room he passed into the business house of Daniel Rindge, a prominent merchant of the period, and later went to sea as supercargo. He followed seafaring life with apparent pleasure, for it carried him to strange ports and introduced him to men and customs, and unconsciously equipped him for that success in public station which he subsequently attained. Alert, vigorous, and ambitious, the momentous issues beginning with the Stamp Act made a deep impression on his nature, and he followed the movements of the time with ever increasing interest and concern. Born a provincial, with the blood of six generations of free American citizenship coursing in his veins, the cause of his country was his own, and he made ready to advocate it and to fight for it even from the beginning. Search as one may, one will not find in all the roll of Revolutionary times a man more typical of the common cause than John Langdon. Such men were the God-sent balances to sustain and to regulate the new nation in the hours of darkness and danger. They represented the faith that found expression in the constitution. It was they, above all others, who breathed the breath of life into the infant people, and it is their spirit that has sustained and will sustain our nation in its moments of direst need. Resolute, self-poised, and just, prepared for personal sacrifice and poverty, they hewed to the line of right, let the chips fly where they would. Versed in the theories of state craft and practised in the science of popular government, men of the Langdon class saw clearly the results to be achieved, and, like the master builders that they were, they took the precaution not to destroy the foundations of the fabric which they had determined to remodel, for they knew it had to be inhabited during the reconstruction and ever after. The king's government had been withheld, invasion was imminent, yet that was the time chosen by the people to show reverence for the law and to command obedience to its ministers.

One of the first acts of the Exeter convention was an address to the people, and among its recommendations was this: "That you dis-

countenance and discourage all trespasses and injuries against individuals and their property, and all disorders of every kind; and that you cultivate peace and harmony among yourselves; that you yield due obedience to the magistrates within the government and carefully endeavor to support the laws thereof." It was the love of order and respect for law as personified by John Langdon that gave to the Revolution a moral force that kept expanding until it touched every throne in Europe. The leaders of our Revolution were sober men, of elegant habits, not carried away by the high-flown tendencies of their French imitators, nor inflated with false conceptions of power and liberty. They saw the mark at which they aimed, and they strove mightily to hit the bull's-eye. Now came the year 1775 with its wealth of storied annals. In New Hampshire we find the people fully alive to the changing conditions, and yet no violence had been done nor any indignity offered to the royal governor. Langdon was full of energy and fast becoming a leader in the popular party. In March, 1775, he was chosen a member of the assembly, and took a prominent part in the proceedings of what proved to be the last royal assembly ever held in New Hampshire. Among the members gathered in the old assembly house Langdon found some of the most eminent men in the province, and yet it must be borne in mind that only twelve miles away, at Exeter, was another assembly calling itself the second provincial congress containing one hundred and forty-five delegates drawn from nearly every town in New Hampshire, and comprising the leading men of every community. In the Portsmouth assembly we find John Wentworth of Somersworth the speaker, Jacob Sheafe and Woodbury Langdon of Portsmouth, Meshech Weare, Nathaniel Folsom, Josiah Bartlett, Clement March, Ebenezer Thompson, and lastly John Fenton, that stout and unyielding Royalist, over whose membership the assembly finally split, only to range itself on the side of the people as against the king.

But a full month before this last royal legislature met, the glorious morning that Sam Adams welcomed had immortalized Lexington and the old North bridge at Concord, and had set the Sons of Liberty toward war. In the arching skies of that 19th day of April, one hundred and twenty-three years ago, patriot eyes instinctively saw the reflection of patriot blood, and in imagination heard that famous shot of the Concord farmers. The news of what had taken place flashed over the land as if sent by Divine agency, and long before Massachusetts called in official voice for aid New Hampshire was prepared and already marching toward Boston. At every ferry over the Merrimack were

crowds of armed men, and every meeting-house green was a rallying place. The men of Nottingham and Epsom, led by Cilley and Dearborn, were on the way in less than twenty hours from Pitcairn's command to disperse, and they stacked arms on Cambridge common ere sunrise on the twenty-first.

John Stark, aglow with patriotic fire, quit his vocation of peace, and, mounting his horse, galloped in the direction of the smoke, crying as he sped on his way for volunteers to follow. Wild and turbulent, the very impersonation of the storm, born to command, impatient of restraint, bursting with energy, Stark reached the scene of war with full three hundred men, and on the 23d, one day later, he had the satisfaction to muster under his banner more than two thousand sons of New Hampshire. And in sight and sound of scenes like these Governor Wentworth, on the 4th of May, convened the last assembly. Hoping to the end that war might be averted, trying compromise and conciliation all to no purpose, the governor adjourned the house to June and anxiously awaited the outcome. In the meanwhile the Exeter congress advised the Portsmouth assembly as to its conduct and duties. Fenton was forcibly expelled, and then seized and sent to Exeter under guard. The governor made prompt remonstrance. The recalcitrant assembly was firm, and in punishment for its defiance was again and again adjourned.

Popular and tactful—in truth, a lovable man—Governor Wentworth stood almost alone and beheld the mighty wave of revolution roll over his native land. He had done all he could do, and, contenting himself with another proclamation, withdrew from the capital and found refuge on His Majesty's frigate *Scarborough*, then swinging in the harbor off the dishonored walls of Castle William and Mary. Thus, without violence or bloodshed, was the Revolution accomplished in New Hampshire, and the sceptre of sovereignty passed from the hands of the king into the hands of the people.

Langdon now changed from the local to the continental service, for the Exeter convention, early in 1775, had chosen him and John Sullivan as delegates to the second continental congress, about to sit in Philadelphia. The journey from New Hampshire to Philadelphia was in those days a formidable undertaking, and in point of time was longer and more difficult than a voyage to Japan would be in our day. But the delegates pressed on, welcomed by strangers at every stage, and refreshed on all sides by the spontaneous enthusiasm of the people. In that second congress was gathered a remarkable set of men, whose equal was never before assembled in any parliament house. First

of all was Washington, then Franklin, the two Adamses, Jay and Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Rutledge, Chase, Roger Sherman, Silas Deane, James Wilson, and others who subsequently served the republic, while presiding in grave and stately dignity sat John Hancock.

No sooner were the sessions begun than the differences of opinion became marked. Jealousies had not as yet poisoned the congress—but suspicions were deep and prevalent. Up to this period the idea of separation from Great Britain had but slight lodgment in the popular mind, and the delegates gradually ranged themselves into radicals and reconcilers. Assuming that Langdon followed the current feeling of New Hampshire, we may conclude that, so far as he took sides at all, he inclined himself rather to the followers of Dickinson than to those of Samuel Adams. But events of a martial kind soon changed the deliberations and shut the gate to reconciliation.

Bunker Hill had been fought, yet congress was ignorant of it, but by some miraculous divination congress foresaw the inevitable, and had created Washington commander-in-chief almost on that very 17th of June. On May 23, 1775, the Exeter convention, in addressing the continental congress used these significant words :

“ Although we ardently wish that, if possible, a connection may yet be preserved between Great Britain and these colonies, founded on the invincible principles of justice and the general principles of the British constitution, yet we are entirely disposed to respect, and willing to submit to any plan of further uniting the colonies, for the purpose of common security and defense.”

On May 31st our convention voted to raise two thousand men, but so slow was mail communication that Langdon and Sullivan knew nothing of the change in public opinion, and, fearing that a spirit of compromise might find favor among the men of Exeter, they despatched a letter from Philadelphia, dated the 22d of May, containing some strong advice. Among other items is this :

“ We are sorry, Gentlemen, that Honor will not permit us to give you the least information respecting our proceedings; we can only say that all the colonies are firmly united and are preparing for the worst. We hope that you will in Imitation of the other colonies proceed to choose your officers and establish your militia upon the new plan which has been adopted by every colony upon the continent.

“ P. S. We earnestly entreat you to prevent our general court from making an application to Great Britain for Redress of Grievances, as

that would draw the resentment of all America upon our Province, it being agreed that no one shall make terms without the advice and consent of the whole."

But no sooner had news of Bunker Hill reached Philadelphia than Sullivan started for New Hampshire, being unable to spend his precious time in debate when war was raging almost in sight of his own home; so Langdon was left in full charge of New Hampshire affairs.

Summer was yielding to autumn; the colonies were in arms; a great battle had been fought; Washington had been chosen commander-in-chief of the continental army, and that army, near thirty thousand in number, lay encamped around beleaguered Boston. Every incoming ship bore intelligence of invading armies and of fleets fit to stifle the foreign communications of the struggling people. Money was becoming dangerously scarce, and the levying of taxes, the very life blood of self-respecting society, brought novel and perplexing questions to the surface. New Hampshire was now free from every touch of royalty. The governor had fled to Nova Scotia, his Tory council was dispersed or locked in patriot jails, the regular assembly stood adjourned forever, and Portsmouth was no longer the capital. In a strict sense the province had no government and existed only by sufferance. All the elements of sovereignty were at hand but uninvoked. They were of no more account than gold hidden in the earth. The Exeter assembly recognized this but hesitated to apply the remedy. Strangely in contrast with every other political upheaval, levelers and nihilists found no chance to ply their trades. Everything was submitted to the test of sound sense, and reason held the sword and the purse strings.

As yet our fathers were without a government, a name, or a flag, and under the laws of nations, had this happened on the high sea, Weare and Thornton and all the others would have been classed as pirates. Painting out the face of George the Third on tavern signs and painting in George Washington's, or changing King street to Congress street were but the humors of revolution and not fundamental principles of government. Fortunately for us our ancestors made the Revolution a business, not a pastime, and, although unskilled in detail and wanting good models, they instinctively recognized the source of all political power, and turned to the whole people. We must bear in mind that the Exeter government was the result of the suggestion made by the regularly convened Portsmouth assembly, and that its mission was to protect the province and guard it from the perils

of the hour. But now arose the great question of civil government and the relations of the people to the autonomy of the state, and the men at Exeter moved cautiously.

In October, 1775, Langdon wrote to the convention and suggested that it petition congress for permission to erect some kind of government, and to New Hampshire fell the honor of having a constitution six months before any other state. The continental congress received the petition with favor, and, in the expressive words of Langdon and Bartlett written from Philadelphia in November, the petition gave occasion for stirring debate. Congress granted the request, recommending such a form of government as should be consistent with a free representation of the people,—“in short, such a government as shall be most agreeable to the Province.” “The argument on this matter,” write the delegates (being the first of the kind), “was truly Ciceronian; the eminent speakers did honor to themselves and the continent and the measure was carried by a large majority.” This was the first step taken by congress to erect a government of the people, and its momentous character was recognized from the first, but the influence of Langdon and Bartlett prevailed, and the experiment of making the first organic constitution was confided to the people of New Hampshire. “We think,” continues the letter, “we can say without any boasting that we have done our duty in this matter, by paying constant attention, for a long time, not only in the house, but in private conversation with members, to clear up any doubts they might have. We can't help rejoicing to see this as a groundwork of our government, and hope by the Blessing of Divine Providence, never to return to our despotic state.”

Sons of the American Revolution and ladies and gentlemen, you will pardon me if I digress to tell you about that first American constitution, and to refresh your memories with the golden facts that New Hampshire, small as it was, struck the first blow at kingly rule in December, 1774, and wrote the first chapter of popular government in January, 1776. Our constitution was finished on the 6th of that month, and long before any of the others was begun. There were no guides for it except the old colonial charters, most of which had been made in the previous century; therefore, judged by the standard of today, we find it a very crude instrument.

New Hampshire was still called a colony, and, to show the uncertainty of the times, our constitution was to continue only “during the present unhappy and unnatural contest with Great Britain.” A house of representatives was created, and a body of twelve men chosen from the five

counties was to be a distinct branch known as the council. Both branches must agree to every act before it should become a law. Neither branch could adjourn longer than from Saturday until Monday without the consent of the other. Money bills must originate in the lower house, while both were to appoint all the public officers. There was no provision for a governor; perhaps the recent experiences paralyzed all thoughts of a headship, but the idea of a double body, and especially the election of the upper one by counties and not by all the voters, was certainly a development in government, and in it we see the germ of representation of states as exemplified in the United States senate. The origin of money bills in the lower house, although a feature of the British parliament, had never before been introduced in America. There were other parts in our constitution, but I have mentioned the most important, and they emphasize the leadership of New Hampshire in helping to solve the perplexities of self-government.

Scarcely had the constitution been put in operation when protests began pouring in upon the representatives. How perilous the situation seemed to many may be understood by the remonstrances signed by such men as Pierce Long, Samuel Sherburne, Hercules Mooney, and others equally distinguished. Among the reasons alleged were these: "that the vote of the Continental Congress Countenancing the Constitution was obtained by the Unwieldy Importunity (*both* within *doors* and without) of our Delegates there; that Virginia and New York which are in similar circumstances and larger and more opulent and presumably much wiser, have not attempted anything of the kind nor even desired it; that such action on our part appears assuming for so small and inconsiderable a colony to take the lead in a matter of so great importance and finally Because it appears to much like setting up an independency of the Mother Country." Such were the sentiments subsisting among some of our people at the breaking out of the Revolution. How such a protest emphasizes the resolution of men like Langdon and his associates, who dared to plunge into the deeps of revolution while others stood shivering on the bank! Yet we must not confuse those Americans who, in 1775 and the early part of 1776, maintained their allegiance to Great Britain and sincerely labored to bring about an understanding; we must not, I say, touch their memories with aught but praise. They were not Tories, but they loved the mother country, and prayed that the blind passions of the hour might be dissipated, and that peace might follow collision. We have only to invoke the history of our own time to find a

similar instance. In 1860 and 1861 we know how strong the spirit of compromise was, and how gladly some of the elect of patriotic New England would have given up principle for peace.

Patriotism must not be wholly awarded to him who sees the clearest or prophesies the nearest. There are others who bear heavy burdens in silence, and pray that the Divine decree may be worked out on the lines of peace on earth and good will to men. And so these honest differences were prevalent at the opening of the Revolution, as they were at the outbreak of the Rebellion; common sentiment was astray and needed focusing. And the focusing came in the Declaration of Independence, even as it came eighty-seven years later in the Proclamation of Emancipation. In accordance with the custom, delegates to the continental congress were chosen for only one year, and as one delegate could represent the colony in the absence of his colleague, we find Langdon in New Hampshire early in 1776, and here he remained constantly engaged in public service until he journeyed again to Philadelphia to take his seat in the memorable convention of 1787. On the 23d of January the Exeter assembly chose as delegates to congress Josiah Bartlett, John Langdon, and William Whipple, but Langdon, skilled in executive affairs and having no taste for debate, preferred to remain behind, and in due time Matthew Thornton took his place and achieved thereby the distinction of becoming one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Langdon had seen enough to convince him of the supreme importance of doing something, consequently he set about buying powder and cannon, and creating a navy. "I think I may with safety," said he in a letter to the committee at Exeter, "serve the colony in this matter and not the least interfere with the Continental business."

In acknowledging his election as a delegate he thus explains his position: "Nothing can give greater satisfaction than to have the approbation of your Honorable House of having done my duty as far as my poor abilities would admit of. I think myself under every tie of Honour and Gratitude to strain every nerve in my Country's cause at this important day, more especially when I receive such repeated honour from my Country. When I shall have finished the business in which I have the honour to be immediately employed by the Continent, or have it in such forwardness to leave, I shall attend in my place at the General Congress where it will be my greatest pride to serve in any way that may be in my power, this Colony in particular and the Continent in general. I lament that my abilities are not greater. All I can say is, I shall employ such as I have (to the

utmost) in the service of my Country." Acting as continental agent for building ships and gathering war material, Langdon now entered upon the busiest period of his life, and connected his name and that of New Hampshire with the birth of the American navy. The naval committee of congress consisted of Silas Deane, Christopher Gadsden, John Langdon, Stephen Hopkins, Joseph Hewes, and Richard Henry Lee, and of these Langdon was second to none.

Keels were laid and ship building progressed rapidly, so that on the 14th of June, 1777, Captain John Paul Jones received from Langdon the 18-gun ship *Ranger*, built of stout New Hampshire oak, and then and there in Portsmouth harbor Jones unfurled to the approving heavens the first United States flag ever hoisted in our navy. Well might John Langdon feel elated at the work he had done, and well may we, the descendants of those days, keep close to our hearts the memory of that event. In December, 1776, Langdon was chosen speaker of the Exeter house of representatives, but he so divided his time as not to neglect his more urgent duties as naval agent. The following year, 1777, he was again speaker, and it was during that term of service that he performed that act of patriotism which placed him in the fore rank of great Americans. That was the gloomiest year of the war, and upon its results depended the weal of the infant nation.

The nation was scarcely a twelvemonth old, and it seemed as if its brief course was spent and that all was lost. Suddenly from the north came the fearful tidings of Burgoyne's triumphant advance down Champlain. The war up to that time had scarcely vexed the inhabitants of that section, but now the Green Mountains and the Berkshire Hills lay straight in the path of the invader. The cry for help woke the silence of Exeter and the house quickly re-assembled. Men and munitions were voted, the state troops organized, measures for raising money passed, but such a vote seemed like brutal mockery, for the public coffers were empty and the resources had been drained and drained.

The house is in committee of the whole with Meshech Weare in the chair, and a profound stillness settles over the room. The members scarce dare to look one another in the face. They count the flying minutes and wonder what the morrow may bring. Who is to pay the cost of such preparation? Then the well known voice of John Langdon spoke out clear and strong. "I have a thousand dollars in hard money. I will pledge my plate for three thousand more. I have seventy hogsheads of Tobago rum, which will be sold for the most

they will bring. They are at the service of the state. If we succeed in defending our firesides and our homes, I may be remunerated; if we do not, then the property will be of no value to me. Our friend Stark who so nobly maintained the honor of our state at Bunker Hill may safely be entrusted with the enterprise and we will check the progress of Burgoyne." The words were spoken, and beneath their spell fear and despair vanished utterly. The stricken state gained confidence and courage. The mighty load was lightened, and from every patriot home went forth praise and thanksgiving for John Langdon.

What a spectacle and what an occasion! A house and council representing the government of one of the poorest and smallest states in the new Union, and a rebel state at that, its soldiers away from their native soil campaigning in distant fields, its frontiers threatened by an army of veterans confidently led, and that army supported by a nation the richest in all Christendom—poor New Hampshire, wounded and weak, stood facing the supreme moment of her fate.

But Langdon's words revived the timid and made of every member a battalion leader. Here was a man rich in lands and merchandise, one who knew the value of money, probably the richest man among our Revolutionary ancestors, but, with a faith in the cause more precious than gold, he gave willingly all he possessed, and proved to his associates and to those who came after them that his purse held nothing save the sacrifice he would gladly lay on the altar of his imperiled country. If death had now overtaken Langdon his name would still remain in the most cherished annals of our state, for his speech that day caused armed men to spring from every hearthstone, gathering force as they neared the invader, until at length, on that August afternoon a month later, Stark at Bennington began the destruction of Burgoyne and his martial hosts. We all know by heart the tremendous consequences of Saratoga, which opened the treasury of France to us and won that alliance which could only be predicated on a victory. The victory was gained, and who dares deny that one of its strongest contributing causes was John Langdon's speech in the Exeter assembly? But Langdon was more than a man of affairs, he was a soldier as well, and followed his famous speech by organizing a battalion, which, under his command, took part in the battles of Stillwater and Saratoga, and later we find him bearing arms under Sullivan in Rhode Island.

From 1776 to the last year of the Revolutionary war, not a year went by without conferring some high office on Mr. Langdon.

He was delegate to Philadelphia, speaker of the house, a member of several constitutional conventions, an officer in active service, naval agent for the continental congress, and a justice of the superior court. But more distinguished public honors awaited him in the future, for in 1783 he had not been president of New Hampshire, nor one of the framers of the national constitution, nor one of the great advocates of its adoption; he had not been our first United States senator, nor the first president *pro tempore* of the senate; he had not been governor of his native state, nor had he declined the secretaryship of the navy offered by his friend Jefferson, nor had he refused the office of vice-president of the republic urged upon him by his friend Madison. Well may I paraphrase the words of Rufus Choate when eulogizing that other illustrious son of New Hampshire, by exclaiming, "What a reputation that must be—what a patriotism that must be—what a long and brilliant series of public services that must be, when you cannot mention a measure of utility nor a public office fittingly bestowed but every eye spontaneously turns to, and every voice spontaneously utters, that respected name of John Langdon."

Bitter and despairing as the long years of war had been, there was ever present the stimulating cause of a common and unfaltering hostility to England, but now came the dark and perilous times when, out of jealousies and suspicions, the men who had fought the battles were now face to face with the problems of civil government. Cornwallis's cannon had saluted the king for the last time, the colonies had burst into sovereign states, the people were free, patriotism had gained its crown. But the great leader, the organizer of war and the protector of peace, undeceived by the figments of the popular picture, addressed to the several states a circular letter containing sentiments so truthful and so wholesome, and yet so hard to realize, that it took the American people a hundred years to embody them in the nation's conscience. Four things, he said, were indispensable to the existence of the United States as an independent power; first, there must be an indissoluble union of all the states under a single federal government, which must possess the power to enforce its own laws; second, the continental debts incurred in making war and securing independence must be paid; third, the militia system must be supported and made uniform in all the states; and fourth (and in this lurk even now the germs of possible disease), the people must yield local interests to the common weal, fling away corroding prejudices, and treat one another as fellow-citizens of a true republic where every man has his rights and his interests, and where the truest reciprocity is the welfare of all. So spoke Washington.

But, alas, these golden words soon lost their lustre amid the turmoil of the hour, for from 1783 to 1788 we had neither principle nor policy. Congress was chased by a mob, the sight of a veteran of Saratoga or Cowpens turned the crowd to wrath, courts were dissolved and judges stoned, crime and spoliation joined hands and danced with drunken glee, men shook off morals as old garments, counterfeiting was to encourage the fine arts, clipping the coin made a man envied and advanced him socially, while smuggling and slave trading were the foundations of riches and influence. Debt and imprisonment for debt pointed the way to irredeemable paper money, and with it came anarchy. New Hampshire suffered and sinned like the others, and was sorely scourged besides by the Vermont controversy. That, indeed, was the time that tried men's souls, and it seemed as if the splendid achievements of the war were to be lost, and that the Declaration of Independence was to become a meaningless piece of parchment. The valor of the people had been the admiration of all Europe, but where now was the wisdom to make that people a nation? As we look back at that period, it certainly does seem strange that, after winning their independence, the very same leaders were unable to maintain it. There were Adams, Franklin, Jefferson, Henry, Hamilton, Jay, Langdon, and all the others, and, noblest of them all, George Washington. Never for a moment had the welfare and the policy of the country been absent from his thoughts, and again it was his leadership that pointed the way. The very weakness of the confederation made the necessity of a constitution all the stronger. The people saw all this, for anything would be better than that weak and despised congress calling itself the government of the United States.

The convention at Philadelphia met in May, 1787, but our delegates were not chosen until the middle of June, and July had nearly passed away before Langdon and young Nicholas Gilman reached the place of meeting. Why there was such delay is not wholly clear, but I am inclined to assign the cause to party reasons, for party lines were now drawn in New Hampshire, though party as yet was merely personal predilection. Only the year before, Langdon had been a candidate for the presidency of New Hampshire, but there was no election by the people and the choice was left to the legislature, which elected him. At the election in 1787 John Sullivan was the successful candidate, receiving 4,309 votes to Langdon's 3,600, and a clear majority of the total vote cast.

I merely mention these elections to impress upon your minds some

idea of the early cultivation of the franchise, and to show that politics is as indigenous to our state as the rigorous winter or the spring freshet. When Langdon and his youthful colleague reached Philadelphia the convention was half through with its deliberations, and some of the more important features of the constitution had been already agreed upon; but there yet remained questions of far-reaching influence which had not been touched, and upon these Langdon spoke with the authority of large experience, and his words had effect. This little side view of Langdon by Rufus Griswold, one of his delegate friends, has some interest to us. "He is eminently practical," says Griswold, "with sterling good sense; is social in his habits, and in his manners easy, unaffected, and pleasing. Among all the members of the constitutional convention there is not one more thoroughly republican in his feelings and tendencies than John Langdon." He was now forty-six years old, a man of middle age we might say, and yet he saw around him many far younger, and a few much older. Let us stand for a moment behind the president's chair, that chair upon whose back was painted the famous sun which gave the text for Franklin's prophecy, and look into the faces of that remarkable assemblage.

There are in all fifty-five members, all noted for personal and public reasons. Twenty-nine of them were college men, while twenty-six, including Langdon, Washington, and Franklin, were not. But the presence of all these distinguished men quickly suggests the absence of others who had so much to do in recent history, and you wonder what keeps such leaders away. John Adams and Jefferson were in Europe; General Nathaniel Greene, whose services in peace were as promising as his services in war were conspicuous, was dead; but Sam Adams and Patrick Henry, above all others the most thought about, were purposely absent, as they disapproved of the convention and afterwards did their utmost to make it inoperative. John Jay was kept at home because of local spite and jealousy. But, with these illustrious names accounted for, behold and forever remember those who, having faith in the future, responded to the call! The two most famous delegates were Washington and Franklin, the one fifty-five years old, the other eighty-one—the oldest member, as Nicholas Gilman of our state, at twenty-five, was the youngest. The next two members, whose intellectual powers are the splendid legacies of the ages, were Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, the one thirty and the other six and thirty years old, but even then, as afterward, they were the great intellects of the republic. Connecticut honored herself by sending Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth, one of them a signer of the Declara-

tion. Massachusetts presents Elbridge Gerry, Rufus King, and Caleb Strong. Pennsylvania has Franklin, Ingersoll, and the two Morrises, Robert and Gouverneur, and James Wilson, celebrated for his attainments in jurisprudence. Then there are McHenry and David Carroll and Luther Martin and others from Maryland; and from Virginia are Washington, Madison, Randolph, Mason, Wythe, and Blair. From the Carolinas came Alexander Martin, William Blount, the two Pinckneys, John Rutledge, Pierce Butler, Richard Spaight. It is a remarkable list of names representing in peculiar fulness the political, the military, and the business ability of the different states. For four months the locked doors of Carpenter's hall hid the convention from public view. The deliberations were kept secret, and therein lay the reason of the convention's success. At last the great instrument received its finishing touches. Compromise had played its all-essential part, the doors were thrown open, and the constitution was in the hands of the people. Then followed a time of doubt and apprehension. Suspicion and malice stalked through the land, honesty and rascality strove for place, while over all hung the dark clouds of envy and rankling jealousies. We were our own worst enemies. It was the house divided against itself as never before, and narrow indeed was the escape of the constitution from utter destruction.

We of these times have no conception of the bitterness that existed one hundred and ten years ago, nor have we anything to suggest the fierce hatred and consuming rancor of those days. When Langdon, on his journey eastward, neared the familiar sights of Portsmouth, his mind must have been sadly unsettled, for the news of the convention had preceded him and it required all his tact and buoyancy of nature to withstand the frowns and coolness of his fellow-citizens. Very serious was the situation, yet men like Sam Adams condemned the patiently constructed edifice, and would have applied the ax simply because a cellar window was out of line or the front door needed a porch. We were narrow in those days, prone to split hairs, suspicious of strangers, envious of progress, skilled in good opinion of ourselves, cautious and taciturn, and given to self-examination. The people saw only certain articles and sections of the new plan of government. They did not or would not see the equipoise of the instrument, while the fact that the creation sprang from the loins of compromise tainted its legitimacy from the first. But the leaders throughout the country took the concrete view, for their experience of the past twelve years taught them many a lesson in the useful practice of meeting one's opponents half way; so, with few exceptions, we find

the prominent men of every state arrayed on the side of the friends of the constitution. The condition that was to give vitality to the instrument was its adoption by nine states; and by February, 1788, when the New Hampshire convention met, eight states had voted in the affirmative, and in one only had the opponents shown great resistance, and that was Massachusetts, where a change of ten votes would have defeated the project. Now came our state. The convention met at Exeter in February, and after ten days' discussion adjourned to reassemble at Concord in June. During the interval Langdon worked day and night for the cause, and he had stout and able friends to assist him, so when June came success crowned his toil, and his name, the first called, led the majority which declared for the new constitution, and at the same time conferred a great honor on New Hampshire by making her the ninth and necessary state to rouse the constitution into life.

Whoever loves to contemplate a symmetrical and well-sustained political development will surely find much pleasure in studying the career of the statesman whose life we are now unfolding. Here was a man of no brilliant parts but of considerable good sense, early attaching himself to the common cause, prompt to deliver that December blow at royal authority, sent to the opening congress and coming home to infuse life into conduct of the war, holding offices, not seeking them, susceptible to self-sacrifice, a framer of our constitutions—both state and national—calm, conciliatory, and wise, it seems but appropriate, after all he had been and all he had done, that New Hampshire should elect him as her first senator under the permanent government he had helped to create.

In March, 1788, the popular vote had called Langdon to the presidency of the state; he was inaugurated in June and resigned in January, 1789, to accept the senatorship to which he had been chosen in November of the previous year. The story of how the remodeled government went into operation, and the slights and difficulties it encountered, are too well known for to-day's repetition—how the members straggled into New York city in parties of four or five, in pairs, and singly; and how March passed and May had nearly come when Langdon, who was president *pro tempore* of the senate and consequently officiating as the first president of the Republic, had the satisfaction to welcome Washington to his new honors. Up to this time there were really no marked party lines, but it was now no longer so, for different views soon formed political parties, the one dominated by Hamilton, the other by Jefferson. Langdon's course,

like that of many of his associates, does not present a clear view of affiliation with either camp, although his past conduct inclined him to a strong government such as Hamilton illustrated; but Jefferson gained an influence over him, and before his term expired Langdon was securely attached to the policy of the secretary of state. It is unprofitable to assign reasons for Langdon's choice, and our mission is not to seek motives or to be critical. We must be contented with the man just as he was; to take into account his ambitions, his friendships, and his surroundings, and the results he achieved; and in the end rest assured that public men of one hundred years ago were much as public men are to-day, quite as human, notwithstanding they powdered their hair and wore short clothes.

On the questions of the period Langdon spoke with knowledge and weight. The tariff called him out, so did taxation. The tonnage bill gave him opportunity to show how well he understood economic subjects and their proper application. In short, he was one of the sound, hard-headed members, whose experience in commercial affairs made him an authority and a safe guide. He espoused the bank bill and subscribed for its shares. He was on the leading committees, and the journals of the senate testify to his faithful attendance and unremitting labors. But his senatorial career was not wholly free from thorns, as the Neutrality Act and the Jay Treaty proved, for on both these occasions we find Langdon opposed to Washington; and to a man of Langdon's composing disposition and social leanings a break with the president and his Federal supporters must have given pain, but, as in many a man of serene deportment, the glove concealed the iron hand. Langdon was peculiarly fitted for society, and political differences must have created barriers between him and the dignified gentlemen composing the Federal party. However, Langdon cast his vote against the famous treaty and was promptly hanged in effigy in more than one New Hampshire town. Portsmouth endeavored to sustain her distinguished citizen, and the mob broke windows and frightened the timid, while the legislature censured him by passing emphatic resolutions of confidence in President Washington and his much-abused minister, Mr. Jay. Popularity was dear to Langdon "as the breath of his nostrils," says one biographer, and the scenes and sentiments at home were not calculated to make his honors worth the burdens, but he had taken the plunge and crossed to the other side, and from this time to the day of his death his political teacher was Thomas Jefferson and his political associates were congressmen hailing from beyond the Susquehanna. The Alien and Sedition

Laws found in our senator a strenuous opponent, and no opportunity was missed to denounce them. Parties had now become political facts, and Langdon ranged himself on the side of Democracy as expounded by the statesman of Monticello. He served two terms in the senate, and he was counted among the best men of that body. He created no discord. He aroused no jealousy, no envy. All was serene and kindly. He had reached his sixtieth year, and, ripe with honors and rich with friendships, he passed from the senate and started on the journey home.

Jefferson was now the chief magistrate of the country, and, casting about for men after his own heart, thought of Langdon, and forthwith offered to him the secretaryship of the navy, but for some cause Langdon declined it, though its attractions must have been strongly attractive. New Hampshire henceforth was to be the theater of Langdon's career, not, however, in the character of a private gentleman but in the almost continuous rôle of public servant; for, in spite of a prolonged absence from the state, the name of no son was so potent for enthusiasm as his, and, resist as he would, his name once mentioned echoed from the sea to the mountains and along the gleaming highway of the Connecticut until the echo, growing stronger each year, summoned him at last to accept the highest honors of his state.

"We are all Republicans; we are all Federalists!" exclaimed Jefferson in his inaugural address, but no sooner had he reached the White House than the partisan knife was whipped from its sheath and vigorously applied to office-holding Federalists. Langdon received a letter from the president expressing the hope that New Hampshire would come into the fold of Republicanism, and the ex-senator was incited to further and greater exertion in behalf of party. He went to the state legislature, where, despite a large Federal majority, he came within four votes of being chosen speaker, so strong was his popularity. He tried again, and in 1804 he won the office and turned it to party ends. The great struggle which was to determine New Hampshire's political position for the next half century now took place. John Taylor Gilman had been governor for a decade, the Federalists were strong and confident, while the Republicans seemed hopelessly in the minority. But the situation was changed, for, with four thousand majority at his back, Langdon, after three trials, became governor in 1805, and Jefferson saw with delight the rout of his rivals in the very stronghold of Federalism. Practical politics, never a languishing crop among our people, now burst into riotous fruitage, overrunning the state, distributing its seeds in the remotest

corners, and making a party camp of every school district. By this time you must have learned that John Langdon was possessed of many kinds of sagacity, and in none did he show to greater advantage than in vote getting. Therein was his power, and its intelligent exercise created a political atmosphere in our state which remains to this very day. Year after year furious campaigns were fought, the governor being the leader. Victories followed every contest save one until June, 1812, when, feeble with age and full of honors, he renounced all further office and sought dignified repose. Once again his name and worth prompted the congressional caucus of that year to nominate him as vice-president on the ticket with Madison, but the old man, contented with the activities of life, declined the certain honor. Elbridge Gerry took his place and was duly elected.

Madison knew John Langdon intimately, and thus spoke of him : "He was a true patriot and a good man, with a noble way of thinking and a frankness and warmth of heart that made his friends love him much, as it did me in a high degree, and disarmed his enemies of some of the asperities indulged toward others." He certainly was a man of fascinating manners and handsome mein. In public life we have seen him occupying positions of honor and trust in state and nation. In private life we know he was unspotted; yet a man of the world, rich, generous, and sympathetic, indulging in splendid hospitality, polished and amiable, a man of affairs as well, versed in the phrase of commerce, owning many argosies. He loved his country. He trusted his fellow-men. He believed in God. The last days of his life were passed in the good old Portsmouth of his boyhood; a father among his children, honored, revered, remembered in the prayers of many a household, he watched with dim and thankful vision the descending of the sun. On the 18th of September, 1819, in the seventy-ninth year of his age, he passed away, and three days later, amidst the trappings of woe and the half-masted flags on land and sea, his body was given to earth amid the solemn boom of the minute guns and the yet more solemn hush of public and private grief.

A few years after and not one was left of all the Revolutionary fathers and soldiers. All had gone from the sight of mortal men and naught save their memories and their examples remained to enrich the republic. In becoming commemoration commonwealth and communities, mindful of the debt they owed, have created memorials of marble and bronze that coming generations may pause and learn the lesson taught by the men of long ago. In this grateful duty New

Hampshire has perpetuated in sculptured form and monument the names of some of her sons, but a niche remains unfilled, a noticeable omission and deep reproach that the splendid services and civic honors of John Langdon await to this late day a memorial to commemorate his patriotic worth. As my parting words, I beg you to think of this neglect and ponder well its remedy, ever remembering that a people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants.

W 34



